

Message Text

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PAGE 01 NEW DE 04382 281405Z
ACTION NEA-10

INFO OCT-01 EUR-12 EA-07 ISO-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-04
H-01 INR-07 L-03 NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-01 PRS-01
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O R 281313Z MAR 77
FM AMEMBASSY NEW DELHI
TO SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 2195
INFO AMEMBASSY COLOMBO
AMEMBASSY DACCA
AMEMBASSY ISLAMABAD
AMEMBASSY KATHMANDU
AMEMBASSY LONDON
AMEMBASSY MOSCOW
USLO PEKING
AMCONSUL HONG KONG
AMCONSUL BOMBAY
AMCONSUL CALCUTTA
AMCONSUL MADRAS
CINCPAC

C O N F I D E N T I A L NEW DELHI 4382

CINCPAC FOR POLAD

E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: PGOV, IN
SUBJECT: SOME THOUGHTS ON THE CABINET MANEUVERING

REF: A. NEW DELHI 4328, B. NEW DELHI 4333, C. NEW DELHI 4335

1. REFTELS RELATE THE DRAWN-OUT AND INTENSIVE BARGAINING WHICH
CULMINATED IN THE DECISION BY JAGJIVAN RAM AND OTHER
RECALCITRANTS TO JOIN MORARJI DESAI'S GOVERNMENT. WE ARE
SUBMITTING THE FINAL CABINET LIST BY SEPTTEL. DESPITE HIS ALLEGED
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PAGE 02 NEW DE 04382 281405Z

RESISTANCE TO BEING RANKED AFTER CHARAN SINGH ON THE LIST, JAG-
JIVAN RAM APPEARS TO REMAIN NUMBER THREE AFTER DESAI AND CHARAN
SINGH. THE REST OF THE MINISTERS ARE ORDERED ALPHABETICALLY.

2. WE HAVE HEARD ONE MORE THEORY FOR THE WEEKEND COLLAPSE OF
THE JANATA/CFD UNDERSTANDING: THE STORY GOES THAT WHEN JAGJIVAN
RAM SAW THE CABINET LIST ISSUED AT MIDNIGHT MARCH 26, HE WAS IN-

CENSED NOT ONLY AT BEING RANKED THIRD, BUT ALSO BY THE REPORT THAT CHARAN SINGH AS HOME MINISTER WOULD BE GIVEN CHARGE OF THE VARIOUS INTELLIGENCE ELEMENTS IN MRS. GANDHI'S SECRETARIAT. RAM ALLEGEDLY ASSERTED THIS STEP WOULD MAKE CHARAN SINGH THE MOST POWERFUL MAN IN INDIA. ALTHOUGH WE HAVE NOT BEEN ABLE TO CONFIRM IT, WE UNDERSTAND THAT AFTER HEARING RAM'S OBJECTIONS DESAI AGREED TO RETAIN CONTROL OVER THESE ELEMENTS IN HIS OWN PRIME MINISTER'S SECRETARIAT.

3. ALTHOUGH RAM, BAHUGUNA AND FERNANDES INDICATED ON MARCH 27 THAT J.P. NARAYAN'S "IMPASSIONED APPEAL" FROM HIS HOSPITAL BED HAD FINALLY INDUCED THEM TO ENTER THE GOVT, WE SUSPECT A MAJOR FACTOR MAY HAVE BEEN POPULAR PRESSURE TO END THEIR POLITICKING AND ASSUME THEIR SHARE OF THE GOVT. AFTER ANNOUNCING HIS REFUSAL TO JOIN THE GOVT OUT OF SYMPATHY WITH RAM, GEORGE FERNANDES FOUND HIMSELF BESIEGED IN THE SOCIALIST PARTY OFFICE BY ANGRY SUPPORTERS WHO DEMANDED THAT HE CARRY OUT THE MANDATE THEY GAVE HIM AND ACCEPT HIS SHARE OF MINISTERIAL RESPONSIBILITY. WE HAVE HEARD-- AND THE PRESS HAS REPORTED-- THAT PEOPLE WERE QUICKLY DISILLUSIONED THAT THE VICTORIOUS JANATA/CFD FRONT HAD SO RAPIDLY BEGUN SQUABBLING OVER THE SPOILS OF OFFICE. ONE INDEPENDENT MP (JANATA-SUPPORTED) TOLD US THAT HIS CONSTITUENTS HAD THREATENED TO COME TO DELHI TO DEMONSTRATE THEIR ANGER UNLESS RAM GAVE UP HIS OBSTINATE STANCE.

4. COMMENT: THE CRISIS FOR THE MOMENT APPEARS TO HAVE BEEN AMICABLY RESOLVED. THE LAST FIVE MINISTERS WERE SWORN IN THE MORNING OF MARCH 28. YET THIS TUSSELE MAY BE ONLY THE FIRST OF SUCH STRAINS TO DEVELOP WITHIN THE HETEROGENEOUS RULING FRONT

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PAGE 03 NEW DE 04382 281405Z

AS IT SETTLES INTO OFFICE. THE RECENT IMPASSE OVER PORTFOLIOS AND PRECEDENCE MAY TURN OUT TO BE A MINOR SPAT COMPARED TO THE SORT OF STRUGGLE WHICH COULD DEVELOP OVER THE FAR MORE DIFFICULT TASK OF HAMMERING OUT COHERENT GOI POLICIES. WE WILL BE COMMENTING FURTHER ON THE COMPOSITION OF THE CABINET. ON THE OTHER HAND, THE FACT THAT POPULAR PRESSURE TO GET ON WITH THE BUSINESS OF GOVT MAY HAVE PLAYED A MAJOR ROLE IN SETTLING THE DISPUTE APPEARS TO AUGUR WELL FOR THE FUTURE. THE ELECTORATE HAS GIVEN JANATA/CFD AND THEIR ALLIES A MASSIVE MANDATE; WE ARE TOLD THE PEOPLE EXPECT THEIR NEW LEADERS TO REMAIN FAITHFUL TO THE TRUST WHICH THEY HAVE RECEIVED. S. MULGAOKAR RECENTLY WROTE IN THE "INDIAN EXPRESS" THAT THE EVENTS OF THE PAST WEEKEND SHOULD SERVE AS A WARNING TO INDIA'S NEW LEADERS: "THE PEOPLE'S EXPECTATIONS FROM THE NEW GOVT WILL BE AT A HIGHER THRESHOLD. UNITY OF PURPOSE MUST NOT BE ALLOWED TO ELUDE THE WORKING OF MR. DESAI'S TEAM". HOW WELL MR. DESAI WILL BE ABLE TO MANAGE THAT TEAM WILL LARGELY DETERMINE THE SUCCESS OF HIS MINISTRY. NO ONE WE HAVE TALKED TO BELIEVES IT WILL BE EASY.

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